

110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1838

To provide for the health care needs of veterans in far South Texas.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 19, 2007

Mr. CORNYN (for himself and Mrs. HUTCHISON) introduced the following bill;
which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To provide for the health care needs of veterans in far
South Texas.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “South Texas Veterans
5 Access to Care Act of 2007”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) The current and future health care needs of
9 veterans residing in the Far South Texas area are
10 not being fully met by the Department of Veterans
11 Affairs.

1 (2) The Department of Veterans Affairs esti-
2 mates that more than 100,000 veterans reside in
3 Far South Texas.

4 (3) In its Capital Asset Realignment for En-
5 hanced Services study, the Department of Veterans
6 Affairs found that fewer than three percent of its
7 enrollees in the Valley-Coastal Bend Market of Vet-
8 erans Integrated Service Network 17 reside within
9 its acute hospital access standards.

10 (4) Travel times for veterans from the market
11 referred to in paragraph (3) can exceed six hours
12 from their residences to the nearest Department of
13 Veterans Affairs hospital for acute inpatient health
14 care.

15 (5) Even with the significant travel times, vet-
16 erans from Far South Texas demonstrate a high de-
17 mand for health care services from the Department
18 of Veterans Affairs.

19 (6) Deployments involving members of the
20 Texas National Guard and Reservists from Texas
21 will serve to continue to increase the population of
22 veterans in Far South Texas.

1 **SEC. 3. MEDICAL CARE FOR VETERANS IN FAR SOUTH**
2 **TEXAS.**

3 (a) DETERMINATION.—Not later than 180 days after
4 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of
5 Veterans Affairs shall determine, and notify Congress pur-
6 suant to subsection (b), whether the needs of veterans in
7 Far South Texas for acute inpatient hospital care should
8 be met—

9 (1) through a project for a public-private ven-
10 ture to provide inpatient services and long-term care
11 to veterans in an existing facility in Far South
12 Texas;

13 (2) through a project for construction of a new
14 full-service, 50-bed hospital with a 125-bed nursing
15 home in Far South Texas; or

16 (3) through a sharing agreement with a mili-
17 tary treatment facility in Far South Texas.

18 (b) NOTIFICATION AND PROSPECTUS.—Not later
19 than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act,
20 the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report—

21 (1) identifying which of the three options speci-
22 fied in subsection (a) has been selected by the Sec-
23 retary; and

24 (2) providing, for the option selected, a pro-
25 spectus that includes, at a minimum, the matter
26 specified in paragraphs (1) through (8) of section

1 8104(b) of title 38, United States Code, and the
2 project timelines.

3 **SEC. 4. PUBLIC-PRIVATE VENTURE FOR MEDICAL CARE**
4 **FOR VETERANS IN FAR SOUTH TEXAS.**

5 (a) PROJECT.—If the option selected by the Sec-
6 retary of Veterans Affairs under subsection (a) of section
7 3 is the option specified in paragraph (1) of such sub-
8 section for a project of a public-private venture to provide
9 inpatient and long-term care to veterans at an existing fa-
10 cility in Far South Texas, then the Secretary shall, subject
11 to the availability of appropriations for such purpose, take
12 such steps as necessary to enter into an agreement with
13 an appropriate private-sector entity to provide for inpa-
14 tient and long-term care services for veterans at an exist-
15 ing facility in one of the counties of Far South Texas.
16 Such an agreement may include provision for construction
17 of a new wing or other addition at such facility to provide
18 additional services that will, under the agreement, be
19 leased by the United States and dedicated to care and
20 treatment of veterans by the Secretary under title 38,
21 United States Code.

22 (b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
23 are authorized to be appropriated such sums as necessary
24 for a public-private venture project under this section.

1 **SEC. 5. NEW DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MED-**
2 **ICAL CENTER, FAR SOUTH TEXAS.**

3 (a) PROJECT AUTHORIZATION.—If the option se-
4 lected by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under sub-
5 section (a) of section 3 is the option specified in paragraph
6 (2) of such subsection for a project for construction in
7 Far South Texas of a new full-service, 175-bed facility
8 providing inpatient and long-term care services, such facil-
9 ity shall be located in the county in Far South Texas that
10 the Secretary determines most suitable to meet the health
11 care needs of veterans in the region.

12 (b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
13 authorized to be appropriated to the Construction, Major
14 Projects, account of the Department of Veterans Affairs,
15 in addition to any other amounts authorized for that ac-
16 count, the amount of \$175,000,000 for the project author-
17 ized by subsection (a).

18 **SEC. 6. SHARED FACILITY WITH DEPARTMENT OF DE-**
19 **FENSE, FAR SOUTH TEXAS.**

20 (a) PROJECT AUTHORIZATION.—If the option se-
21 lected by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under sub-
22 section (a) of section 3 is the option specified in paragraph
23 (3) of such subsection for a project of a Department of
24 Veterans Affairs-Department of Defense shared facility to
25 provide inpatient and long-term care to veterans at an ex-
26 isting facility in Far South Texas, then the Secretary

1 shall, subject to the availability of appropriations for such
 2 purpose, take such steps as necessary to enter into an
 3 agreement with an appropriate military treatment facility
 4 to provide for inpatient and long-term care services for
 5 veterans at an existing facility in one of the counties of
 6 Far South Texas. Such an agreement may include provi-
 7 sion for construction of a new wing or other addition at
 8 such facility to provide additional services that will, under
 9 the agreement, be leased by the United States and dedi-
 10 cated to care and treatment of veterans by the Secretary
 11 under title 38, United States Code.

12 (b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
 13 are authorized to be appropriated such sums as necessary
 14 for a Department of Veterans Affairs-Department of De-
 15 fense venture project under this section.

16 **SEC. 7. FAR SOUTH TEXAS DEFINED.**

17 In this Act, the term “Far South Texas” means the
 18 following counties of the State of Texas: Aransas, Bee,
 19 Brooks, Calhoun, Cameron, Crockett, DeWitt, Dimmit,
 20 Duval, Goliad, Hidalgo, Jackson, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells,
 21 Kenedy, Kleberg, Nueces, Refugio, San Patricio, Starr,
 22 Victoria, Webb, Willacy, and Zapata.

○